



DIRECT ACTION TACTICS

Introduction.

There have been many times when we have wished that we had a zine like this. Especially when we find ourselves talking to folks that are “new” to anarchism and the whole notion of fighting back, it’s sometimes difficult to start a conversation on tactics. This zine offers a broad overview of direct action tactics and basic ideas for how to successfully implement them. In addition, it discusses the importance of affinity groups for undertaking these ideas. It offers a range of ideas that move well beyond the simple idea that “protest” is just about holding signs and courting lawmakers.

The zine is made of selections from a book titled *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anti-capitalism that was edited by Notes from Nowhere. The original book chronicles the anti-capitalist/anti-globalization movement of the late-1990s and early-2000s. Consequently, a lot of the tactics discussed here come out of that context.*

As best we can remember, this zine was picked up at the 2003 anti-F.T.A.A. (Free Trade Area of the Americas) convergence in Miami, Florida. It was originally published by the Orange County Revolutionary Anarchist Collective. Thanks to them for the idea.

See you in the streets,
Sprout Anarchist Collective
<http://sproutac.org>

which everyone's misdemeanour charges were reduced to a \$5 jaywalking ticket, and no one had to give their real name.

So what can jail and court solidarity look like?

» When you are arrested with other activists who you do not know, look around and check in with each other. Are there any medical emergencies, is everyone OK? Exchange names or nicknames, and get to know one another.

» Communicate those names or nicknames to someone not arrested. This can mean shouting out of a police vehicle to an activist with a notepad, to then share with a legal collective (see below) group, or your friends.

» As people may be at physical risk while under arrest it is crucial that all tactics are decided collectively, and that all voices are heard. It is important to have rotating facilitators so the police do not single out any one person as a ‘leader’.

» Decide collectively how you will respond to certain situations. If the police try to separate one person from the group, which is common, people have used various tactics including piling on top of that person and insisting they are not removed.

» A tactic is something you do (eg: chant incessantly). A demand is something you want (eg: some water). You use tactics to get demands met (eg: we're going to chant incessantly unless you bring us some water).

Matching tactics to demands and appropriate escalation are keys to successfully accomplishing our collective goals. Make sure the cop, guard, judge, etc. one is talking to can meet the demands and is directly affected by the tactics.

» What can we do if our tactics aren't making them meet us our demand? We can stop or escalate. If singing isn't working, try singing off key. Then try screaming; then screaming and pounding on the

door; etc. Make sure the tactic is still on the same level as the demand. We may also collectively choose to stop.

» Be ready to use solidarity tactics to protect people who are likely to be separated in jail and prosecuted more harshly in court. Non-citizens, people of colour, people who are seen as leaders, transgender or queer people, people with disabilities, people who dress ‘punk’ and people with prior arrests are examples of vulnerable people.

» Once out of jail and in the court system, we need to maintain solidarity. This can mean anything: organizing people to attend hearings, demanding collective trials, representing ourselves, creating theatre in the court to show the fare that it is.

» Legal collectives are helpful in any action. A legal collective can be a number of things. A trusted group of activists who work with lawyers to track us through the arrest, jail, and court process is invaluable. Legal

collectives are never to tell activists what to do, but help facilitate with communication, advance training, and interfacing with lawyers.

US law collectives:

» People's Law:

www.PLCL/~tao.ca

» Just Cause:

www.lawcollective.org

» Midnight Special:

www.midnightspecial.net

In the US the National Lawyers Guild, often supports activists: www.nlg.org

UK legal help:

» The Activists' Legal Project - advice on running workshops for UK grassroots groups: www.activistslegalproject.org.uk
» Liberty - your rights explained: www.yourrights.org.uk/your-rights/index.shtml
» LD MG (Legal Defence and Monitoring Group):
ldmgmail@yahoo.co.uk

Jail Solidarity

"Keep your focus on the meaning of what you are doing as your hands are cuffed behind you. Your challenge now and for a long time to come will be to remember, at each stage of what happens to you, that you have a choice: acquiesce

or resist. Choose your battles mindfully: there will be many of them and you cannot fight them all. Still, every instance of resistance slows the system down, prevents its functioning, lessens its power ... And when you get out of jail you will see where the jail

is thinly concealed in the shopping mall, the school, the television program. You will know that at every moment you do truly have a choice: to acquiesce, to resist, to create something new."

– Starhawk, *Making it Real* 'initiation instructions'

Jails protect those with access to the system from those without, and are used to demoralize and dehumanize us. As a result of our struggle for a better world we are sometimes arrested, either for breaking the law, or often just to intimidate us or get us off the streets. Struggle does not end with arrest. By acting as a strong group, those arrested can have the power to transform jails into places where we continue to look after ourselves and others rather than succumbing to the disempowering system that wants to control us. Jail solidarity is one way of doing this.

Solidarity is protecting each



Red hand prints cover police station walls. Oaxaca, Mexico

other and ourselves through group decision making. It is a philosophy and an approach, not a set of tactics, and it can prove extremely effective in jails and court houses, which are designed to make people feel alone and powerless. In some places jail solidarity has become synonymous with certain non-compliance tactics, such as withholding one's name and identification. While this can be a powerful tactic, it is only one of many – the key is to work together to find out what is the best for everyone in the given situation.

A few of examples of successful jail solidarity are: Nelson Mandela organizing with other prisoners on Robben Island in South Africa to gain better conditions; arrested Suffragettes refusing to eat while in jail, until all women were released together; 150 anti-IMF protesters disobeying police and prison guards in Washington DC, negotiated a plea bargain in

Affinity Groups

An affinity group is the fundamental unit of direct action. It is a self-sufficient support system which may develop actions on its own, or may work with other affinity groups toward a common goal in a large action. The most effective groups consist of 5-15 people, and they usually strengthen over time. They differ from other groups of friends in that participants tend to have more in common, there is an absence of hierarchy, and over time, a deep trust in the group's intelligence can develop,

allowing us to let go of some of our own prejudices and consider what is best for the group.

Every affinity group must decide for itself how it will make decisions and what it wants to do. This process starts when an affinity group forms. If a new person wants to join an affinity group, she should find out what

the fascists. In 1969, affinity groups organized a massive nonviolent blockade during the 30,000 strong occupation of the Ruhr nuclear power station in Germany. In 1971 in the US occupations of the Seabrook nuclear power station, when 10,000 were arrested, affinity groups were key, as they were throughout the highly successful anti-nuclear movement. More recently, they were used with outstanding success in the mass actions in Seattle, Prague, and Québec City, where the open manner of organizing created a framework within which affinity groups could plan autonomous actions.

Affinity groups form the basic decision-making bodies of many mass actions; they also frequently work together as study groups, or provide services to their community. Within the group, there is a whole range of roles that its members can perform, which could include: a media liaison, a facilitator for meetings, a note taker, someone

trained in first aid, a legal observer. As well as fulfilling these roles, the affinity group can take on a specialized role in the way it interacts with other groups, or operates within the action or community. There can be affinity groups specializing in copwatching, communications, health care, street theatre, or blockading. With a focus, each affinity group can do its job and support the work of others. In this way, many affinity groups form a network that achieves exponentially more than equal numbers of unaffiliated activists ever could.

The thing to remember is that an affinity group belongs to you – you can decide what actions and what degree of risk you wish to take. Bringing creative people together to work and play collectively is one of our most powerful acts of resistance.

Resources:

» Temporary Anticapitalist Teams: www.temporary.org.uk



Affinity group discussion. Andalucia, Spain

Organizing Chaos

In the days leading up to a mass action, whether in Seattle, London, Washington, Prague, Davos, Québec, Gothenburg, or Genoa, the air is tangibly electric as people arrive in town and prepare themselves and their environment for the demonstrations. Cities are transformed overnight as graffiti and posters mysteriously crowd out corporate advertisements, and billboards are transformed into canvases for radical propaganda. A general framework for the actions at hand has been crafted in advance, in face-to-face meetings, over internet listserves, and on telephone conference calls. Then thousands of people, many of them total strangers, come together in dozens of meetings running late into the night.

The skeletal plan for the direct action to come is made flesh and blood, sometimes outright rejected and turned into something else. These actions will belong to everyone and their success will rely on the level of participation.

To facilitate this vital participation, it's essential that there be a location in which we can gather, and a system through which communication, information sharing, and collective decision-making can happen. Events like the Seattle shut-down owed much of their success to the convergence centre space and the spokescouncil meetings.

Convergence centres. Thousands of people are moving about, clustering in impromptu debates, checking a schedule of workshops on the wall, lining

statement. Give your pie an name – Baked Alaska for a global warming villain, say.

Step 3: Disguise yourself

It doesn't take an economist like Milton Friedman (pied in 1998) to figure out that if you attempt to enter a fancy hotel, you will draw less attention to yourself if you look like everyone else. If you shave, dress up, and keep your hair average, you can go anywhere. You can sneak your pie into the corridors of power concealed in a brown paper bag, or if it's firm enough to go vertical, put a lid on it and carry it in a briefcase.

Step 4: Consider media

A key element of any pie launch is documentation.

Because it's difficult to pie while shooting video, it's good to work with a friend or two. Expect not to be the only media present, and be ready to talk intelligibly. This action is essentially one of public theatre – when the media come calling it's good to have pithy soundbytes prepared to highlight your issue.

Step 5: Launch the attack

Some pie slingers work in teams. The splattering of Bill Gates was a masterful coordination of 30 individuals in groups of three, carrying a total of 25 pies. Multiple pies give you more than one chance to score a direct hit. However, some prefer to work solo, finding it more heroic and

romantic. Most agree that a quick quip as you hurl the pastry can work wonders, clarifying your intent and message. Be aware that assault charges are not unheard of, so the more gently and lovingly you can cream your target, the better it will look in court.

Step 6: Consider the consequences

Expect shock and chaos. Anything can happen. Everyone may laugh and pretend that they are in on the joke, or security guards may attack violently, and have you arrested or detained. But once you are able to regroup with your allies, it's crucial to celebrate.

Finally, remember that it doesn't take special skills to toss

a tart. Anyone with a pie and a vision of a better world can speak pie to power.

"Never doubt that a small and dedicated group of people with pies can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

– Subcomandante Tofutti, after

Margaret Mead

Resources:

"For the latest in Pies:
<http://bioticbakingsbrigade.org>

Below: Renato Ruggiero, then Director-General of the WTO, pied. London 1999



The Pie's the Limit

"It is better to pie on your feet than to live on your knees."

– Emiliano ZaPieta



How to deliver just desserts to the powerful:

Step 1: Pick a worthy target
Aim for someone infamous, whose crimes should be revealed, and don't be afraid to think big. You may plot to pie someone for months, or spontaneously decide to do it the next day. Be sure you can clearly articulate the reasons for your choice, and carefully consider the level of security you are prepared to outsmart.

Step 2: Obtain a pie
According to market research, the best full-face coverage comes in the form of a coconut cream pie. Most pie throwers are in agreement that you shouldn't use red filling, as it could be mistaken for blood. Vegan pies are less firm than those with eggs – a problem which results in less theatrical results, but may be worth it to make a political statement.

up for a free meal, painting banners, laughing. There is a frantic energy engulfing the massive warehouse space, and ricocheting off the rafters; it is the energy of too many sleepless nights, the energy of anticipation, the energy of a common vision, the energy of history being made.

You've entered a convergence centre, a gathering site for people to come together, learn new skills, meet new allies, hold incredibly long meetings, and together, make plans for the upcoming actions. A convergence centre can be little more than a space in which to gather, or it can be a highly coordinated community centre, offering information to folks from out of town, helping to find accommodation, hosting cultural events, trainings, spokescouncil meetings (see below), health clinics, free meals, art-, puppet- and banner-making, and so on.

The best convergence centres are temporary autonomous zones, outside of the cash economy, miniature and imperfect versions of the world we wish to create, where everyone can participate in feeding and caring for each other, teaching and learning from each other, and developing tactics and strategies together to achieve common goals.

Spokescouncil meetings The spokescouncil meeting is the coordinating and networking structure that enables very large numbers of people to discuss and decide things, usually by consensus. It is a form that has similarity to decision-making processes of many different cultures over a large span of time, including many indigenous nations around the world, many Bedouin and tribal Arab cultures, and the Spanish anarchists in the years leading up to and during the Spanish Civil War.

Affinity groups, and clusters of affiliated affinity groups choose spokespeople who are empowered to speak for the group. The spokespeople sit in a circle, with their affinity group behind them. In this way, groups can confer during the meeting and participate via their spokesperson, but only spokespeople address everyone, vastly reducing the amount of time required for inclusivity.

Spokespeople are responsible for carrying their group's plans, decisions, and opinions to the spokescouncil, as well as relaying information and decisions back to members of their group who aren't present. Power is decentralized – the group retains its autonomy, and yet is able to closely coordinate with others, all of whom have agreed that this model of communication can best maintain their diversity, while at the same time allowing them to create political space.

As with most things, the spokescouncil model works best when the affinity groups have been together for a while and are skilled both at making quick collective decisions, and at being willing to let go of some of their opinions, trusting in the collective intelligence of the group.

Resources:
» Texts on consensus decision making, facilitation and 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness': <http://www.spunk.org/texts/consensus/index.html>
» Meetings and consensus toolbox: <http://www.uhc-collective.org.uk/toolbox>

Street Reclaiming

"CARS CANNOT DANCE: When they move they are violent and brutish, they lack sensitivity and rhythm. CARS CANNOT PLAY: When they diverge from the straight and narrow, they kill. CARS CANNOT SOCALIZE: They privatise, separate, isolate, and alienate."

– London Reclaim the Streets agitprop

Imagine a packed city street in London, shoppers mingling on the thin strip of pavement that separates the store-fronts from the busy road. Two cars career into each other and block the road. The drivers get out and start to argue. One of them brandishes a hammer and starts to smash up the other's car. Passersby are astonished. Suddenly people begin to surge out of the anonymous shopping crowd and jump on top of the cars, others flinging multicoloured paint everywhere. Before anyone



Tripods block the road to traffic and open it for pedestrians. Streatham, UK

Guerrilla gardening can take many forms, and is practiced all over the world – from the hundreds of community gardens on vacant lots in New York, to the squats on decontaminated GMO test sites in Britain and Germany; from the London May Day 2000 action to the landless Thai and Filipino peasants who plant vegetables on squatted golf courses; from the neighbourhood in San Francisco who used broken parking meters as planters, to the IMF/World Bank protesters in Washington DC, who developed a tree planting project which involved going door to door with saplings and a flyer linking deforestation with Bank policies, and offering to plant trees outside people's houses if they agreed to care for it.

And if any one tells you that growing our own food is not 'realistic' for large cities, tell them about Havana, the Cuban city of 2.2 million people which has over 1,000 public gardens,

employing 30,000 people producing 70 per cent of the city's fresh fruit and vegetables. It's also worth remembering that a lot of what we call weeds – nettles, dandelions, chickweed, nuts, and berries – provide wonderful food for free and require little effort, and no need for clandestinity.

How to Guerrilla Garden:

1) Do some reconnaissance

First find your ideal site. It could be a railway embankment, golf course, roof top, car park, vacant lot, quiet corner of a local park, crack in the pavement – the choice is endless. Consider ease of access, contamination, and your impact on the surrounding community.

2) Arm yourself

Growing things is not as difficult as you think. It's also vital for biodiversity. Seventy-five percent of crop plant varieties went extinct in the 20th century. Join a seed bank, save, swap and

has time to catch their breath, 500 people emerge from the underground station and take over the street, reclaiming it from commerce and cars for people and pleasure. An enormous banner is unfurled over the two destroyed vehicles. "Reclaim the streets – free the city – kill the car," it proclaims.

Thus began the first Reclaim the Streets party in Camden High Street, May 1995. All afternoon people danced to the sound of the mobile bicycle-powered Rinky Dink sound system. Free food was served at long tables stretching down the middle of the road while children played on a climbing frame placed in the middle of the now-liberated crossroad junction.

This was the birth of the street party as a tactic, and it spread rapidly across the world – sometimes involving tens of thousands of participants, other

to abolishing capitalism. You never know, the taste of locally grown fresh food might convince them to join the guerrillas!

"Humanity is born free but everywhere is in supermarket chains buying 14.7 cm long carrots stripped of dirt, geography, effort, labour

stripped of content, context, joy and flavour
buying 14.7 cm long carrots stripped of carrothood".

– Steve Hancock, 'In Between Poems, Pig and Ink books, 2000

Resources:

- » Primal Seeds:
<http://primalseeds.nologic.org/>
- » UK seedbank: www.hdra.org.uk

After several months of tending, your garden will be ready for harvest. Why not invite friends and neighbours to share your first home grown meal? You can turn it into an event, share your stories of guerrilla gardening exploits, show them before and after photographs, and eventually turn the conversation

Guerrilla Gardening

"Armed with trowels, seeds, and vision, the idea is to garden everywhere. Anywhere."

– Primal Seeds



Planting vegetables in Parliament Square, May Day 2000. London, UK

threat to capitalism as it begins to break us free of the cycle of supply and demand, liberating us from the role of passive consumer, remote from real decisions, alienated from nature.

Capitalism is a system that separates everything from everything else. Take food, for example. What was the last thing you ate? Where was it grown? How far did it have to travel to get to you? How many lorries, planes, boats were required, and how much oil used? How much did you pay for it, and how much did those who grew and picked it get? How many chemicals were used to grow and package it?

How much control did you have over how the food that passed your lips was produced?

There is a way out of this ignorance and dependence – growing our own food. Learning to produce our own food is a

To grow food we need land, yet most of us have none. Capitalism's first act is often the privatization of common, or public, land, whether we are talking about the enclosures of seventeenth century England or the Mexican Government's repeal of Article 27, the law which until 1992 guaranteed common ownership.

But whether you're in the countryside or the city, there are always little gaps, holes, places that can be transformed into small oases providing food for you and your neighbours. This is where guerrilla gardening comes in.

irate. Calm them down with clear instructions.

Step 10: At least a couple of the boys in blue will fail to get the point and nick people – six is generally the minimum to convince their paymasters it was worth all that overtime. Of course you found a solicitor who understands about street protests and distributed a bust card with their number, a phone number to collect details of arrestees, and basic advice. Make sure someone stays awake, alert and near that phone to take messages, gather names, and organize a defendants' meeting a week or two later.

Get together with even more like-minded friends and plan the next one. Organize in your community, workplace, school and street.

Resources:
from www.reclaimthestreets.net

for this collective daydream to give to participants and passersby on the day.

Step 7: For opening the street – or rather stopping it being re-closed by the traffic – ribbons and scissors are not enough. A large scaffold tripod structure with a person suspended from the top is useful. Practice in your local park. Blocking the road with a car that can then be dismantled is nice. Even the traditional barricade will do.

Step 8: Rescue some young trees from the road of your local "development" and have them ready for planting. You may need a pneumatic drill and safety goggles for the last bit.

Step 9: Have a street party! Enjoy the clean air and colourful surroundings, the conversation and the community. Bring out the free food, dance, laugh, and set off the fire hydrants. Some boys in blue may get

Step 4: Publicize! Word of mouth, leaflets, posters, email, carrier pigeon. Make sure everyone knows where and when to meet. Posters and paste go well on walls, billboards, and phone boxes. Leaflet shops, clubs, pubs – everyone, even your mum.

Step 5: Sort out your sound system. A party needs music – live, some DJs, acoustic, samba drums, yodelling – go for diversity. Invite jugglers and clowns, poets, prophets, and performers of all kinds. Ask campaign groups to come along and set up a stall in the middle of the road.

Step 6: How will you transform the space? Huge banners with a message of your choice, colourful murals, a bouncy castle, a ton of sand and a paddling pool for the kids, carpets, armchairs. The materials and money from earlier may come in useful here. Print up an explanation

times a few hundred. The magical collision of carnival and rebellion, play and politics is such a potent recipe and relatively easy to pull off, that anyone can do it. Even you...

How to sort a street party:

Step 1: Get together with some like-minded people. Possibly your friends. Work on a plan of action. Sort out different roles, jobs and time frames. Imagine. What's possible?

Step 2: Decide on a date. Give yourselves enough time. Not too much – a deadline is a great motivator – but enough to sort the practicals: materials, construction etc. You may need money.

Step 3: Choose the location. Your street, the town centre, an underground train, a shopping mall, a corporate lobby, a busy road or roundabout, a motorway! A separate meeting place is good: people like a mystery, bureaucrats don't.

Squatting Spaces

In the broadest sense, to squat means to occupy a space that is poorly utilized, or not used at all, and transform it. Squatting is an ancient practice, ongoing since there have been empty buildings or unused land. Wherever you find inadequate housing, a lack of meaningful public space, or landless people in rural areas, you will also find squatters.

Long perceived as dirty low-lives who just want a free ride, squatters have developed a world-wide social movement, challenging capitalist notions of Property while providing an impetus for self-determination, independence, experimentation, and creativity.

One of the earliest documented groups of squatters were the Diggers in England. Declaring that "the earth is a common

treasury for all", they took over unused land in 1649 to farm it communally. They hoped that their ideas and practice would spread, and that property owners would surrender their estates and join their communal living project. Although they were eventually evicted, their vision lingers on.

Modern examples of squatting are found in Brazil, where landless peasants have reappropriated millions of acres of unused farmland, in Manhattan, where a diverse mix of young punks, immigrants, and the local homeless occupy tenement buildings; and in Italy, where there is a vast network of squatted social centres – community hubs for activism, art, youth, and free living space.



Homeless families living in squatted building, Porto Alegre, Brazil

plane. The refugee's lawyer waiting at the airport used the extra hours to successfully get a new hearing in the refugee's claim for asylum.

No Border camps
No Border camps have been mushrooming across the US, Australia, and Europe. A temporary camp is set up as close to a border as possible. The camps become sites for the exchange of political experiences, as well as cultural and media activities. They create a space, often in remote areas, to gather, discuss, and make connections, as well as to take direct actions to disrupt the border posts or help refugees cross safely. No Border camps have appeared on the shores of the Straits of Gibraltar, the beach of Tijuana, in the desert at Woomera, Australia, and on the borders of Ukraine and Slovakia, Poland and Belarus to name a few. Even Frankfurt's international airport became a

site for a 1000-strong border camp in July 2001, forcing police to cordon off the entire airport to anyone without tickets for a week. Actions included an illegal classical music concert inside one of the terminals.

Targeting detention centres
Writing to refugees inside detention centres and sending them international phone cards (their lifeline to their families) is one of the easiest actions one can take. Disrupting the building of new centres is one way to highlight the issues locally. A new detention centre in Italy was demolished by a group, which included priests and members of Parliament, and two more were closed down due to protest.

In Baxter, Australia, actions were accompanied by an independent radio broadcast in the immediate area of the detention centre. It took incoming phone calls from the

refugees inside, and thus established a two-way line of communication with the people imprisoned.

Some have gone as far as to tear down fences and free refugees. This requires, among many things, solid support networks and living spaces for escaped refugees.

Resources:
» **No Border network, fighting for freedom of movement for all:** www.noborder.org
» **Annual US/Mexican borderhack event:** www.borderhack.org
» **UK National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns:** www.ncadc.org.uk
» **Australian support for escaped refugees:** www.spareroomsforrefugees.com

No Borders, No Nations

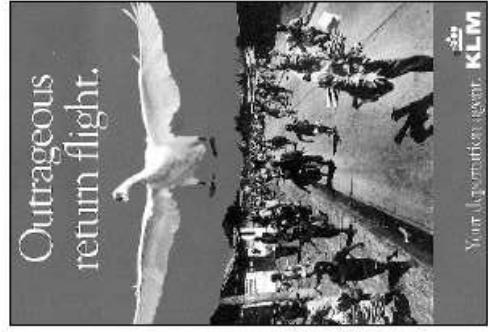
No-one is illegal

The barbarism of migration regimes cause thousands of deaths along the borders between East and West, North and South. As it gets easier for the flow of money, goods, and capital to roam around the globe, for most people, crossing a border to escape poverty, war,

catastrophe, or political repression becomes more and more difficult. Inspired by the autonomous direct actions and self-organization of the sans-papiers refugees in France in the early 1990s, activists in many countries have begun developing new tactics to disrupt these migration regimes.

Flying deportation class

Many airlines are committed to enforcing inhumane asylum policies by flying refugees back to the places from which they fled. Most of the refugees, who are transported against their will, try to resist their deportations. Law enforcement agencies have used extreme



force, including sedatives and handcuffs, against those who are forced to fly 'deportation class'. This has led to several fatalities. Legally out of any national jurisdiction, the captain of a plane has ultimate responsibility for the lives of all passengers, and the guards accompanying the deportee have no more legal status than that of any other passenger. Thus, passengers who intervene in incidents which pose a direct danger for life or physical safety of their fellow passengers, including such deportations, are acting lawfully and do not have to fear being prosecuted on grounds of resisting enforcement officers.

Ways of obstructing the policies of airlines deporting refugees and asylum seekers are many, ranging from participating in email campaigns to object to the deportation, to visiting refugees inside detention centres - all the way up to

and your friends? Clear goals from the beginning can help you select an appropriate site. Preparedness and planning are key, before you actually break any locks.

3) Learn local laws

Do some research on your area and, if possible, talk to local squatters. Legal issues and local tolerance are different everywhere; it's best to know what you're up against, and what will work to your advantage. For example, in the UK, once you're in and change the locks, it becomes a civil matter and the police can't remove you from the premises without taking you to court.

How to squat:

- 1) Form an affinity group

It's no fun to squat alone, and can be downright dangerous.

2) Name your desires

Do you want living space? A social centre or community space? Something temporary, for a publicity stunt or a party? A convergence centre for an action? A secret hideout for you

gaining entry. From this you can determine what tools you'll need. Bolt cutters for locks are great, yet unwieldy; crowbars are essential. Try to do as little damage as possible while cracking (opening) the place; if you're successful, it will be your home, and you'll have to fix whatever you break!

5) Fix 'er up

Once you've changed the locks and secured the place, the real work begins. If possible reconnect the electricity and water (if you don't know how, get help). Then, redecorate! Feel free to knock out walls, paint murals on the ceiling, and move the bathtub into the living room if you want. The space is yours.

Another crucial thing to consider is your profile in the neighbourhood. Sometimes survival depends on total secrecy, other times, on community support. If you decide to meet your

neighbours, be friendly and open about your intent. Some squats provide community services, and are known as 'social centres'. People might be stand-offish initially, but may warm up once they realize that you aren't running a crack house. However, they may be opposed to your presence and make you pack up and try a different place. Squatting requires experimentation and perseverance; its lifeblood is the commitment to reclaiming space, and the rebel pioneer spirit which fuels us to take control of our lives in yet another way.

Resources:

- » International internet magazine focusing on squatted houses and other free spaces: www.squat.net
- » Information from the Advisory Service for Squatters (ASS) who have run a daily advice service for squatters and homeless people in the UK since 1975: www.squat.freeseve.co.uk

Culture Jamming

"If any of you work in advertising or marketing, kill yourself. No, seriously. Kill yourself."

– Bill Hicks, US comedian

Early evening. A crowd of commuters stands on the platform of a San Francisco train station, avoiding eye contact and glancing occasionally at the overhead monitors. Suddenly, a gust of wind indicates an imminent arrival. The crowd looks up to the monitors in unison, checking the train's destination. The stream of adverts switches to the characteristic lettering of a destination message – only it reads, "Capitalism Stops at Nothing." The message blinks twice before giving way to the train's destination. And for a few seconds, hundreds of people scratch their heads and wonder the same thing: "What

the hell just happened?"

What just happened was a perfect example of culture jamming. Sometimes known as media hacking, information warfare, or poetic terrorism, it's an assault on advertising and consumer culture involving the deliberate disruption, distortion, or subversion of mainstream media messages to expose their hidden meanings.

Culture jamming ranges from the simple alteration of billboards – with spray paint or pasted up text using similar fonts, the redesign of logos, the printing of spoof newspapers, such as *The Financial Crimes*, to more complex forms involving hacking websites, or developing intricate press pranks. Although the techniques and media vary, there is one key characteristic: the subversion should feel and look like the real thing. Attention to detail is

key and the more closely the jam can mimic the media it is trying to distort, the more successful the action will be.

Here are a few examples of culture jamming to inspire the semiotic guerrillas in all of us:

What just happened was a perfect example of culture jamming. Sometimes known as media hacking, information warfare, or poetic terrorism, it's an assault on advertising and consumer culture involving the deliberate disruption, distortion, or subversion of mainstream media messages to expose their hidden meanings.

GI Jane

The voice boxes of hundreds of GI Joes and Barbie dolls are switched, and the dolls placed back into shops. Unsuspecting consumers buy the altered dolls and suddenly have a sparkling Barbie huskily intoning, "Dead men tell no lies", while a combat-ready Joe squeals, "Want to go shopping?" A leaflet hidden in the box tells them to ring their local media, and is signed the Barbie Liberation Front. The media love the story; Mattel, who manufactures the dolls, is outraged.

Rename the streets

As the war on Iraq intensifies, brand new street signs appear saying: "Shame on you Enron for getting caught! You need more creative accountants and better PR!"

in Buenos Aires. The street once called "United States" has been renamed with plaques that look identical to the official municipal ones. The street is now called "People of Iraq".

Billionaires for inequality

"Because inequality is not growing fast enough," reads the byline of "Billionaires for Bush and Gore", a bipartisan coalition of super-rich donors to political parties. Dressed in tuxedos and evening gowns, they have been seen pressing wads of fake money into the cops' pockets and thanking them for repressing dissent, chanting slogans – "We don't care who you vote for, we already bought them both" – during political party conventions, and holding a press conference after the Enron scandal where they admonished the company,

to the person locked down. If locking on to a machine, someone MUST let the driver know that operating it will break someone's neck. You should also be prepared for the lock to be cut off – a pair of safety goggles and ear plugs are essential for this.

Padding up

Developed by the Italian Tute Bianche movement as a nonviolent but confrontational tactic, padding up is a method of self defence. Turning the detritus of consumer society – cardboard, old mattresses, inner tubes – into body armour transforms you into a hilarious hybrid of Michelin-man/woman, clown, and gladiator, but most importantly it protects you from police who, you mustn't forget, have been trained to hurt you.

The basic idea is to protect your most exposed and vulnerable parts: your head, neck, and face, lower back, ribs, groin, abdomen, and all of your joints.

addition of jovial singing and coloured balloons. Not only is it great theatre, it also makes for a whole new way of looking at street actions. When a whole group with shields works together, they create the ultimate in mobile barricades. The shield becomes not only a way to defend our bodies, but a way to demand and claim our rights to move freely.

Shields can be made of anything – trash can lids, tarp, foam, plywood, cardboard. The material choice depends on many factors: speed of construction, concealment from police or border guards, type of action, number of users. The most high-tech ones are made of tall sheets of clear Plexiglas on wheels; lower-tech shields can be made from large rubber inner tubes, which are fun and bouncy – and make the police look like they are busting up a beach party.

Shields

Watching a phalanx of padded-up Tute Blanche attempt to nonviolently push through a police line, using their 'tortoise' formation of shields, evokes Roman army scenes from Hollywood epics – with the

All of these techniques are incredibly effective, and to do them safely, require further research and planning. Police responses vary from bemusement and befuddlement to attack and outright torture, so having a solid support group is really crucial. Have fun, and remember the proverb, "If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito."

Resources:

- » Download **BODYHAMMER**, a full-colour booklet with tactical info and great tips on making gear for cheap: www.devo.com/sarin/shieldbook.pdf
- » Thorough UK site with good links and a broad spectrum of information: www.wombles.org.uk/www.free.freespeech.org/yabasta/protection.html
- » Supply lists and where to get gear from New York Ya Bastas: www.eco-action.org/rf/index.html
- » For more on looking-on: www.eco-action.org/rf/index.html

Disobedient Bodies

"With our bodies, with what we are, we came to defend the rights of millions – dignity and justice – even with our lives. In the face of the total control of the world which the owners of money are exercising, we have only our bodies for protesting and rebelling against injustice."
– Italian priest Don Vitaliano, participating in a Tute Blanche action.

To engage in direct action means literally embodying our feelings – performing our politics with our whole body. Placing ourselves directly in the cogs of the mega-machine transforms the body into both weapon and statement of resistance – whether it's to delay a bulldozer that's destroying woodland or to enter a corporate HQ. Here are just three techniques, all of which are best done by affinity groups.



Locking on against climate change. Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam

Locking on
Locking on is the technique of attaching your body to something so that it's difficult for anyone to remove you. Locking on has been used for delaying evictions, saving ecosystems, preventing delegates from attending summits, and much more. Since time equals money, every minute it takes them to remove you hits them where it hurts – in their pockets. Always remember to go to the toilet – or wear a nappy – before you lock-on to anything!

One of the best tools for locking on are bicycle D-locks or U-locks. They fit neatly around your neck and can attach you to pieces of machinery, gates, etc. Work in pairs when locking on. One person locks themselves down and their buddy keeps the key, and stays nearby to provide food, extra blankets, and other support



Consumer choice

Nike's Express Yourself website gives the customer the chance to have the message of their choice embroidered on a new pair of shoes. Someone logs on and requests shoes embroidered with the word sweatshop. Nike refuses the order and the resulting email debate between Nike and the culture jammer is forwarded to millions around the world.

Resources:

- » UK artists and subvertisers:
www.uhc-collective.org.uk
- » Culture Jammer's Encyclopedia: theory, techniques and links everything you need in one place:
www.syntac.net/hoax/index.php
- » Old masters of the genre:
www.billboardliberation.com
- » *Abusters* magazine: the journal of the mental environment.
www.abusters.org
- » *Activist Cookbook*, Andrew Boyd, United for a Fair Economy, Boston, 1997.

A billboard advertisement for Diesel, transformed. Manchester, UK

Dismantling War

How do you resist the war-mongers, when they have the guns, the bombs, the soldiers, the bankers and the money on their side? Find tactical pressure points. Make it cost more to continue waging war rather than ending it – and cost can be public opinion, political credibility, as well as spiralling budgets. Giant rallies certainly have their place, but there are other strategic and creative ways to resist too. Here are just a few examples.

Spanner in the works

Military bases are built where local resistance is expected to be minimal. So get busy. In the 1980s, women camped outside the US military base at Greenham Common in the UK and set rows of rubber ducks into the concrete on the runways so the planes couldn't take off. In Vieques, Puerto Rico, site of a vast US military

base, locals resisting the testing of bombs camped out for over a year on the bombing range in 2000. After they were cleared off by force, local fishermen remained hiding there, risking their lives to stop the bombing.

During the Gulf War of 2003, numerous acts of sabotage occurred. At a US spy base in Yorkshire, UK, people came with miles of tin foil in an attempt to disrupt satellite communications. Others flew helium balloons in an attempt to prevent aircraft taking off.

Access roads into the base were blocked. Some locked themselves to dragnets across runways. One woman destroyed a fleet of military vehicles used to service the bombers by pouring sand and treacle into the engines. In Ireland, military aircraft on their way to bomb Iraq had to stop refuelling at Shannon airport, such was the level of protest.



find medics in the crowd. It's good to be aware that medics may be arrested, as the police generally won't treat you differently than other protesters. Prepare yourself also for boredom – long marches where nothing happens, no one gets hurt, and you're stuck carrying loads of water.

Step 2: Get first aid training

Start with a basic course, and if you like what you learn, get more training. There are several radical healthcare collectives in the US and in Europe that teach first aid courses addressing our special needs as activists. But if there isn't one near you, the next best thing would be to find something like a wilderness first responder course. This may seem strange if you're an urbanite planning a street party, but if you imagine the city filled with riot police, road blockades, public transport strikes, or other disruptions associated with large actions, you can see that the trip to the

Lots of water and latex or nitrile gloves are essential. A good attitude, even more so. And don't forget a bandana or two.

Step 4: Coordinate with others

Working with a partner is highly recommended, in fact, you'd be completely crazy not to. This is for safety reasons as well as practical reasons – it's nice to have someone to watch your back, call for help, and shoo away the media while you're focused on helping someone. You could be a medic for your affinity group, or you could form a group in which all members are medics. Whatever you do, it's good to figure out your limitations, not only in terms of medical skills, but also regarding your level of comfort. Do you want to be in the front lines all the time, or do you want to wait around the corner and catch people as they run from police charges? Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know how to deal with this injury," and seek someone who does; don't

shy away from saying "I don't feel comfortable staying here."

Respecting your limits is one of the most important things you can do on the streets.

Step 5: Take care of yourself

Witnessing lots of injuries can be hard. Debriefing with others after actions, even if only for ten minutes, can really help prevent trauma, burn out, and feelings of isolation. Be sure and drink lots of water, and be good to your body and mind. It's crucial to work sustainably.

Hopefully this information helps you to be safer and stronger in your activism. Remember that we do this because it's important and fun, and that at least some danger is essential to life.

Resources:

- » Info on protest safety, trainings, and pepper spray/tear gas: www.blackcrosscollective.org
- » US network of street medics: www.action-medical.net

Action Medical



Street medic during Sádka, Prague, Czech Republic

It may seem strange to think about first aid as a form of direct action, but the reality is that our healthcare needs as radicals are different, and groups such as the Red Cross/Crescent don't meet them. Emergency medical services tend to coordinate with the police during demonstrations: this frequently means they can't or won't cross police lines in order to treat the injured. And they certainly don't have much experience removing the contact lenses and scrubbing the bodies of hundreds of people after they've been pepper sprayed by the police. This is where street medics come in.

It doesn't take an expert with lots of certifications to help keep people safe and secure during an action. A neurosurgeon who can't work collectively is less useful than someone who has no technical skills, is really nice, and has lots of water to share. Some of the most important stuff

can be done by anyone. It's always useful to try and spread calm. You can try and negotiate with police to allow an ambulance to come, or to delay a police charge until a patient has been evacuated. You can even help by handing out information about healthcare post-action, or lists of free / activist-friendly clinics and practitioners.

How to fight the power and do no harm:

Step 1: Prepare yourself

Because you'll sometimes be working in extreme conditions, it can be good to mentally prepare. Talk with other healthcare workers (activist or not, some of the issues are universal) about the stress and the gratification: watch videos of mass actions to get a sense of crowd dynamics and tactics used, and envision yourself working in similarly chaotic situations; go on actions and see if you can

young men in the US. Today enforced conscription does not occur in the US or the UK, but is still an issue in many countries, and people around the world are in jail for refusing to serve.

In Israel, every citizen is drafted into the army. Many refusniks are in prison for refusing to serve in the military, in protest at the Occupation.

But even where there is no draft, military recruiters come to schools and colleges, where they can also be met with resistance.

In the US, poor, black, and Latino communities are targets for military recruitment. Half of frontline US soldiers in the 1992 Gulf War were people of colour. This is 'economic conscription' – when kids with few options join up for the tuition, scholarships and training. Activists are setting up alternative stalls next to army recruitment drives. In May 2003, in Oxford, UK school children left class, occupied the town centre, and blockaded an army recruitment stall for several hours.

Cannon fodder
Thousands of British Conscientious Objectors were imprisoned for over two years – 73 of whom died there during the First World War. During the Vietnam War, dodging the draft became a major preoccupation of

Target the profiteers

One of the most powerful long-term strategies is to unmask and obstruct those who have a direct interest in the pursuit of war: go for the moneymen.

A week before the 2003 Iraq war started, 20 activists disrupted trading at London's International Petroleum Exchange, Europe's major centre for trading in futures contracts for crude oil, highlighting the links between war in Iraq and the West's compulsive oil habit. Despite being set upon by traders, the protesters unplugged telephones and computers and brought trading to a standstill for two hours. In other places, petrol stations were shut down.

Others have concentrated on the battle for resources that helps to fuel wars. Coltan in mobile phones fuels war in the Congo; oil and access to oil fuels wars from Colombia to Chechnya to Iraqi, diamond money fuelled conflict in Sierra Leone. Boycotts (eg of coltan)

and alternatives (eg converting vehicles to biodiesel) can be innovative ways of highlighting the issue and stopping the root causes of war.

There are increasing numbers of private corporations and mercenaries directly involved in war.

British firm Sandline International sent mercenaries to crush the 1996 Bougainville rebellion in Papua New Guinea and is implicated in the Sierra Leone conflict. US firm

Dyncorp is contracted by the US military to undertake operations in Colombia. Pipeline builders like Halliburton and Bechtel, and arms dealers like Lockheed Martin have all been ripe targets for office protests and anti-war direct action.

Resources:

- » Guide to military dismantling: www.tridentploughshares.org
- » UK direct action against war: www.disobedience.org.uk

Solidarity and Sabotage

"Sabotage is aimed directly at 'the boss' and at his profits, in the belief that that is the solar plexus of the employer, that is his heart, his religion, his sentiment, his patriotism."

– Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, The Conscious Withdrawal of the Workers' Industrial Efficiency, 1916

The term sabotage often brings to mind media images of people hurling bricks through the windows of transnational companies, or of small covert groups committing acts of property damage under cover of darkness. These actions can put economic pressure on large corporations and draw



Sabotage is not just about property destruction. Barcelona, Spain

achieving short term goals while working towards long-term visions.

Of course, the most commonly used tactic of workplace solidarity is the strike. Strikes can be incredibly effective, however, striking workers don't get paid, and are often locked out of the workplace. This doesn't mean strikes aren't useful, but it's important to be creative. This is about reclaiming what unionism really is – workers acting together in their common interests, plain and simple. There are plenty of possibilities for action with or without the support of a union; many don't even require you to miss a single paycheck.

Wobblies (members of the Industrial Workers of the World) call it "striking on the job". Here are just a few tactics:

and honest with customers and state their true feelings about working under grueling conditions for low pay when asked: "How are you?" Complete honesty is also subversive – stating that goods are overpriced, of low quality, and can be found cheaper elsewhere makes an interesting sales pitch! With trust and advance preparation, workers can avoid obvious manipulation such as singling out "ringleaders", and can use this as leverage to force their boss to negotiate. If this doesn't work, an escalation of tactics can follow.

Good work strike: Doing essential work competently may not seem like sabotage, but in France, hospital workers who were afraid that a strike would compromise the health of their patients came up with an excellent strategy. They refused to file billing slips for drugs, lab work, or any other procedures, and spent more of their time with patients. The hospital's

the wearing of which made one clumsy and slow-moving – less efficient.

Sabotage in the workplace

frequently involves individualistic one-off actions, or pranks, which may be expensive or damaging to the business' reputation, but which, alone, are limited in their effectiveness. This sort of action, while often entertaining, serving to blow off steam, and clearly measurable in broad economic terms – just ask any business owner about the costs of absenteeism, worker theft, and vandalism – generally doesn't lead to an improvement in working conditions, as the individual often disappears shortly after the prank, leaving no sustained pressure on the employer.

What's important for sustainable and effective workplace solidarity is building the power and community of the workers, using a spectrum of tactics which can be escalated as necessary, and

income dropped by half, and after three days, the hospital conceded to all of the worker's demands.

Work-to-rule: In most workplaces, the boss imposes a set of rules and structures to run the business. The workers then determine more efficient, and often safer ways of working. Think of all the silly rules at the various jobs you have had, which, if you followed them, would have resulted in, reduced productivity, or even a complete collapse of the business. The notion of the work-to-rule is brilliantly simple — workers follow every rule, no matter how foolish, inefficient, or ill-advised. They break no laws, cause as much disruption as a strike, yet everyone still gets paid! In Austria, where national law requires that postal workers weigh each piece of mail to determine the required postage, workers ceased the common practice of estimating

weights, and began weighing every single piece. By the second day, post offices were completely congested with unweighed mail, and the government swiftly entered into negotiations. Dockworkers on the US West coast recently instituted a work-to-rule, in which they followed all health and safety regulations. Since working on the docks is incredibly dangerous, there are innumerable safety rules. By following them, workers reduced efficiency coast-wide by 50 per cent. The employer was forced to complain that the workers were obeying the rules, and the workers were empowered in the knowledge that they know the best way to run the business.

Resources:

- » *The Troublemaker's Handbook: how to fight back where you work, and win!* by Dan LaBotz, Labor Notes, 1991
- » Wobblies' website: www.iww.org